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# SOFTBALL

basic manual  
for coaches

NFB photo

youth and recreation branch





## FOREWORD

This booklet is dedicated to and written for those people who devote their free time to helping boys and girls.

A group of eager youngsters gather about a man (or woman), their coach. They look to him for help and guidance. This book is designed to help that coach do the job that he earnestly wishes to do, more effectively.

Although the words "boy" and "boys" appear throughout this booklet, it is not to be interpreted that softball is not a game for girls also.


Softball is a game which combines the elements of simplicity of equipment, skill, excitement, fun, character development and recreation. It is a game that can be played and enjoyed by both sexes and all ages.

The principles and teaching techniques laid down in this booklet are equally applicable to all groups and to all those who wish to participate either competitively or just for plain recreation.

There have been many books published on the scientific and highly technical aspects of baseball and softball. This booklet makes no attempt to equal or excel them. It is intended solely as a guide, a compilation of aids and hints which we hope will help you as a coach to do a better job.

THE PLAYER COMES FIRST





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## SOFTBALL MANUAL FOR COACHES

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## THE ROLE OF THE COACH

Most people used to think of a coach as someone who taught boys to swing a bat, kick a ball or score a goal. But do a coach's responsibilities stop there? Do they not go much further? More and more people are coming to believe that his responsibilities do go much further. They realize that a real coach also embodies strong qualities of leadership. In fact, the stress today is upon leadership.

For too long, anyone who had a passing knowledge of a game was eligible to coach a group of boys. Teaching game skills was the only end he worked towards. Leadership is even more important. A leader sees skills and games as important tools, as a means to a more lasting end. He is concerned with imparting wholesome attitudes and practices which will influence and direct a boy long after he has stopped playing a particular sport. Though this is a big claim, it is nevertheless true. You know it from experience.

The boys with whom you come in contact are in the most formative period of their lives. They are as malleable and impressionable as wet clay. Attitudes formed and habits moulded now will be lasting. Whether these attitudes and habits will be good or bad rests, to a large extent, upon you as their leader.

Sport is probably the richest medium for influencing a boy's character (for better or for worse). The results will be in direct proportion to the quality of the leadership that he receives.

Sportsmanship is at a low ebb among players, coaches and spectators alike in far too many centers. A "win-at-any-cost" attitude is dominating the game. How often have you seen visiting players threatened, officials booed as they step on the field and attacked as they leave it? How often have you seen the "smart" coach take advantage of a weak rule, or jump screaming from the bench to protest every close decision? Your answer is probably "too often". Yet you, as a coach and leader, more than any other individual, have the power to better this situation. By your example, you can influence both players and spectators to observe sporting ethics.

Another blight upon sports has been the over-emphasis of the few highly skilled boys and the championships won — to the neglect of the many who can never become great. If we agree to the basic assumption that sports are good for people, then we must make it possible for everyone to participate, irrespective of their skill level. The real leader is just as interested in the many average boys as he is in the very few "stars".

One of the prime objectives should be to enable every person to play some game from which he derives enjoyment and a feeling of satisfaction.

## DO YOUR PLAYERS HAVE FUN?

In the heat of a close, hard-fought game, a boy's true self is going to show through. Life situations and game situations can be very similar. A leader who is really interested in helping boys will watch for these innumerable incidents and take time out to teach a lesson in a subtle manner. These "teachable moments" can be utilized to impart healthy character traits which will stick as indelible memories with each boy.

These added responsibilities may seem to be far removed from the old idea of coaching but they aren't. Rapidly it is being realized and accepted that leadership and coaching just cannot be separated. They must go hand in hand.

You, the coach, exert a tremendous influence upon these boys. They experience a natural feeling of "hero worship" toward you. They will look to you for inspiration and guidance. You cannot escape it. They will inevitably follow your example, be it good or bad. It is your job to insure that the example you set is a good one. The influence that you may have and the responsibility that you assume are great. As a leader of boys, you will have one of the most important roles in the community.

How do you measure up as a leader? Can you really answer "yes" to the following questions?

- Do you insist that your boys play fairly?
- Do you encourage and promote good sportsmanship among your players?
- Do you employ every available means to promote good sportsmanship among spectators?
- Do you set a good example of sportsmanship for others to follow by your conduct both on and off the field?
- Do you openly applaud a brilliant play of your opponent?
- Do you treat officials with due respect?
- Do you lose a game with dignity?
- Do you always try to uphold the rules of the game?
- Do you treat visiting teams as guests?
- Do you try to impart more than just game skills to your boys?
- Do you give equal attention to the average boys as well as to the stars?
- Do you exploit "teachable moments" to instill sound sporting attitudes and practices in your boys?
- Do you analyze yourself, your habits, practices and teaching methods regularly?
- If you had a young brother or son, would you be the person whom you would choose to lead him?

You, as a leader, can render a real service to boys. It is not always an easy task. The challenge is great. Yet the satisfactions derived are well worth the effort.

BOY + GOOD LEADER = GOOD SPORTSMAN



## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN BASEBALL AND SOFTBALL

For many years, there have been long and loud disputes about baseball as opposed to softball. Surely no conflict need exist between these very fine games. Each has its own particular merits, which appeal to different boys.

In this booklet, we are primarily concerned with the fact that the fundamentals involved in each game are essentially the same.

Teach your boys the basic skills. They are the important things to master. Boys will easily adjust to any small differences encountered between baseball and softball.

Each game has its place in the community since they are both enjoyable and provide wonderful mediums for developing good sportsmanship and sound citizens.

## ORGANIZING A TEAM

### Manager

Unless one has done it himself, he will have great difficulty in appreciating the extensive planning involved in organizing and running a team.

The wise coach will get a responsible manager to relieve him of the multitudinous details for which he himself just does not have the time.

Choose him on the basis of dependability, interest and character.

There are increasing incidents of coaches using handicapped youths as managers. These boys, often abounding in desire and enthusiasm, can be of invaluable assistance to you. You too can do them a real service by making them feel wanted and needed. There is a place for every boy in sports. It waits only for a wise coach to find the right place for each one.

THE GOAL IS NOT ONLY BALLPLAYERS BUT CITIZENS

## Manager's Duties

Work in close cooperation with the coach and assist him whenever and wherever possible.

- Don't wait to be told. Anticipate needs.
- Look after eligibility forms.
- Get birth certificates when needed.
- Be responsible for all equipment. Keep it in good condition. Have it readily available.
- See that the diamond is kept in playing condition — weeded, lined, etc.
- See that the schedule is posted and all players know about practice, and game dates, times and places.
- Be sure that players are on time for practice and games.
- Keep club records and charts.
- Post information gathered from charts kept.
- Arrange for transportation when needed.
- Handle team funds on trips.
- Stay in touch with league executive.
- At the game, check lineups.
- Find out ground rules, if any.

## Assistants

We have discussed the importance of using handicapped boys as assistants.

Further to this you might look for an ex-player in the community to help you. Pick someone who is reliable, enthusiastic, competent and of sound character.

- Be sure to take him into your confidence.
- Bring him in on your long range program.
- Meet with him for a few minutes before each practice to run over the day's program.
- Give him encouragement and praise whenever deserved, especially publicly.

## Pre-season Preparation

Try to interest some local service group in sponsoring your team. Help them to see the job to be done with and for boys.

Become affiliated with a recognized league.

Try to find competition for your boys that is on their own ability level.

SELF-DISCIPLINE IS THE KEY TO GOOD CONDITION



Locate and reserve playing space for your team — EARLY.

Check your equipment. What are your needs?

Meet with prospective team members and outline the season's program.

Stress that they must be willing to put the team first and themselves second.

## S p r i n g   T r a i n i n g

If you are fortunate enough to have access to a gymnasium, you can get a head-start on training. If not, move out into a dry piece of ground as soon as the snow is gone.

Most boys are active twelve months of the year. Conditioning for baseball will consist of concentrating upon wind, and leg and shoulder strength.

- Keep practices short and easy.
- Make sure that arms and shoulders are kept warm.
- It may not be wise to massage sore muscles. Rest those muscles but exercise the rest of the body.
- Pitchers need 15 minutes to warm up before going onto the mound.
- For the first few practices don't let anyone throw the ball too fast or too far (especially outfielders).
- Use lead-up drills and games that stress the fundamentals.
- Concentrate on retaining the batting eye and fielding.
- The secret is to build up and increase the practice load.
- One of your most difficult tasks will be to curb the boy's natural enthusiasm and desire to overdo spring training.

## T r a i n i n g

Stamina and good physical condition are prime requisites for any athlete.

The coach's approach to this element will vary with the age and background of his players. Here are some suggestions:

- Give reasons for observing training rules.
- Stress individual and team discipline.
- Set a good example yourself.
- Give individual attention and counsel where necessary.
- Keep your rules reasonable and to a minimum.
- Make no exceptions for any breach of discipline even by the "first string".
- Drop any boys from the team who inveterately break training.
- Use signs, posters, pictures and mottos to encourage training.
- Remember your responsibilities as a leader are to help boys whenever possible.

DON'T PLAY FAVOURITES

## Injuries

Injuries are dreaded by all players and coaches. They can defeat you more surely than a strong opponent. The number of injuries sustained might be diminished by:

- Good condition
- Good equipment
- Sound game skills
- Safety precautions

### Condition

Have every boy medically examined before the season begins.

Most youngsters are active twelve months of the year and thus are never out of condition.

Since different muscle groups are stressed in each sport, have the boys break into the new game GRADUALLY.

Watch out for signs of overfatigue, especially on hot days.

Weigh your players regularly. Loss of weight is your first indication of deeper causes. (Too much practice, insufficient sleep, etc.)

### Equipment

Don't play with faulty equipment.

Be sure that your catcher is properly protected.

Each boy should have sliding pads. (If you can't buy them, make them.)

### Game Skills

The incidence of injuries is far less when a skill is performed correctly.

Teach players correct techniques. Make players conscious of them so that they naturally check one another.

Place the responsibility upon the players themselves.

NEVER PLAY AN INJURED BOY



## Safety Precautions

- Check all your equipment.
- Explain how "horseplay" increases accidents.
- Play only opponents of the same age, size and skill.
- Teach your players to be safety conscious.
- Clean and medicate slide burns IMMEDIATELY.
- Rings plus softball can mean serious finger injuries. Rings should be removed to prevent serious finger injuries while playing.
- Don't take chances. Refer any injured boy to a doctor. Team insurance is available and is strongly recommended. (See your local insurance agent.) Each league should have liability insurance.

## Choosing the Team

Often a coach will have a nucleus of hold-overs from the previous year around which he can build his team.

In softball, important members of the team are the pitchers and the catchers. Try to get strength and depth in your batteries.

In softball, your team's strength and depth should be "Up the Middle", particularly your pitcher and catcher but also the second base, short stop and centre field positions.

Look for boys with:

- A real desire to play and learn
- Team spirit
- An ability to master the fundamentals
- Aggressiveness
- Game sense

Shift your players around until you discover the position which they like and play the best.

Don't be in too big a hurry to make your final selection. Some boys who come along slowly at the beginning of the season often turn into your dependables by mid-summer.

Read the section on practices (page 47)

## At the Game the Coach Should:

- Confer with the manager to insure that everything is in order.
- Devote himself to checking the "mental outlook" of his players.
- Give them a short pep talk suited to the particular need.
- Avoid introducing new, unfamiliar tactics which will confuse the team.
- Use a clubhouse whenever possible.
- Be calm (calmness begets calmness).

A TEAM THAT WON'T BE BEATEN, CAN'T BE BEATEN

- Encourage his battery.
- Never bawl out a boy in public.
- Give any last minute instructions to his base coaches.
- Get the best umpires possible — then forget about them.
- Have someone charting for him.
- Keep his team hustling until the last out is called.

## COACHING PROBLEMS

### PUTTING ACROSS YOUR IDEAS

- Stick to fundamentals.
- Plan your practices (See special section).
- Have a long range goal. Keep it in sight as you plan.
- Whenever possible, give individual attention.
- Try to encourage boys to practise on their own once you have shown them a skill and corrected their mistakes.
- Progress only as fast as the boys can absorb it.
- **Interject** new skills and drills to dress up the fundamentals.
- Keep charts (See Coaching Aids).
- Be patient.
- Follow these steps when teaching:
  - Explain and demonstrate
  - Have players perform the skill
  - Correct faults
  - Repeat correct form

### GETTING PLAYERS TO PRACTISE FUNDAMENTALS

- Introduce novel and interesting games, skills and drills when teaching fundamentals.
- Make your drills competitive.
- Change the drill or fundamental before interest lags.
- Show enthusiasm and genuine interest yourself.
- Post testimonials of "big league" players, stressing the importance of hard work and fundamentals.
- Have players "buddy up" and work together after practice, correcting and assisting each other. It not only eases your burden but makes boys stop and think about what they are doing. This may be used extensively and successfully from the midgets to the big leagues.

### A COACH'S JOB DOESN'T END WHEN HE TEACHES SKILLS



## UNDERSTANDING YOUR PLAYERS

- No two boys are exactly alike. Adjust your methods and techniques to fit their differences.
- Get to know each boy as an individual. Your job does not end when you leave the diamond.
- Be patient and sympathetic to a boy's limitations.
- Get the team together occasionally on a social basis.
- Go as a team to see the best softball games possible and discuss them.
- Trips away from the home town can be memorable experiences for boys.
- You must gain a boy's confidence before he will respond to your teaching and leadership.
- Remember how you felt, thought and acted as a boy.

## CREATING AND MAINTAINING TEAM SPIRIT

- Confidence in a large measure determines morale.
- Every player must be in top condition all season.
- Players must strive to master the fundamentals until they become automatic.
- Let the players know that you have confidence in them.
- A sense of humour among players is indispensable.
- Have a team uniform even if it is only a 25¢ cap or a white T-shirt.
- Keep the diamond in A-1 condition.
- The team should go swimming, or to ball games as a group.
- Keep the equipment in good condition.
- Try to take some trips, if only to the next town.
- Be sure that the competition is neither far below nor far above the level of your team.
- Work towards "crucial games" and "rival games".
- Build up a natural healthy rivalry with other teams.
- Play well as a team regardless of the outcome.

## HOW TO DO A BETTER JOB OF COACHING

- Enthusiasm, patience and a genuine desire to know and to help boys are essential.
- Constant self-analysis of your coaching methods and techniques are necessary.
- Search constantly for new and better methods and techniques.
- Attend coaching refresher courses.
- Talk to other coaches and read authoritative material on your sport.

## TAKE STOCK OF YOURSELF AND YOUR METHODS REGULARLY

## Teaching Game Fundamentals

Whether boys play "pee-wee" or "senior" softball, the basic skills do not change.

The most important factor is to teach the RIGHT TECHNIQUE EARLY. Then constant repetition of the right way will make its execution eventually automatic.

In this booklet it is assumed that the coach has a basic knowledge of the game. To supplement this knowledge you have seen filmstrips and movies. You have discussed knotty problems and specific situations and you have had a chance to perform each skill.

Building upon this, the succeeding chapters will try to point out some ways to help you do a more effective job as a coach.

### A Few Tips on Teaching Game Fundamentals

- Break down each skill into its fundamental parts. It is easier to teach and learn when presented in this manner.
- Use games, skills and competitive drills to put across fundamentals.
- Be patient, praise improvement but don't be satisfied with anything less than perfection.
- Analyze each fundamental game skill.
- Evaluate your teaching methods and techniques constantly.
- In all drills insist upon good form. Don't let them get sloppy and careless. Stop to check errors.
- Time is always too short. Once you have taught boys the proper techniques, pair the players off so that they may practise together.

The following sections of this booklet contain suggestions to guide you in planning your practices and to aid you in your teaching.

You will add many more. Any drill that involves game skills and fundamentals is of value.

TEACH ONLY WHAT THE PLAYERS ARE READY TO ABSORB



## CATCHING A BALL

The important fundamental of catching the ball must be a carefully developed skill.

Select a glove that feels comfortable and allows full control of the fingers.

### ABOVE THE WAIST

- Get directly in the path of the ball
- Keep eyes on the ball throughout its flight
- Distribute weight evenly to facilitate movement in any direction
- Keep relaxed
- Point fingers upwards, palms outward
- Allow wrists and elbows to give a little like shock absorbers when ball is caught

### TO THE SIDE

- Keep your balance at all times
- Point fingers downwards
- Bend knees in readiness
- Cover the ball with the bare hand the instant that it strikes the glove hand
- Observe other rules of catching the ball

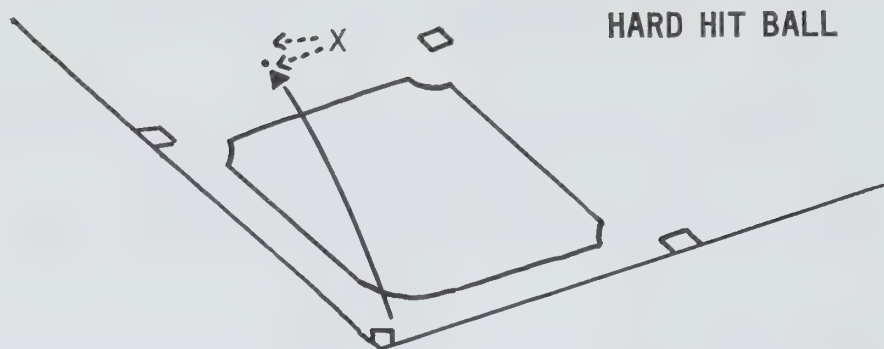
### FLY BALLS

- Station yourself directly under the falling ball
- Elbows should be higher than shoulders
- Keep forearms at a 45° angle upwards
- Point fingers upwards slightly in front of the eyes
- Have wrists relaxed and recoil arms with the impact of catch
- Keep your eye on the ball until it is caught
- Get the ball into the infield immediately

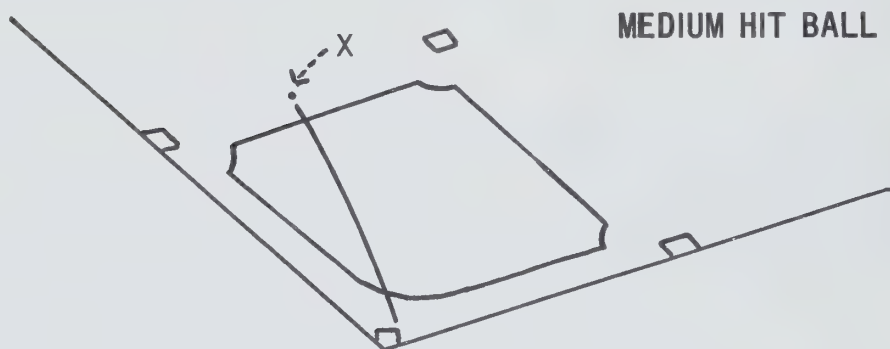
### GROUND BALLS

- Move into the path of the ball
- Distribute weight evenly
- KEEP LOW — hands should touch the ground, palms outward
- Once ball is in glove, trap it with the bare hand
- Spread feet, left in front of right if throwing right-handed, reverse for left-handed
- Keep in a crouch position

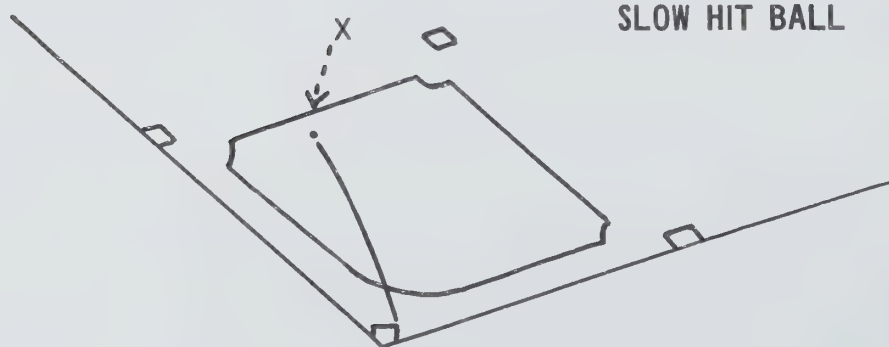
NEVER USE ONE HAND WHEN YOU CAN USE TWO



Cut either straight across or diagonally back to field a hard hit ball



Run diagonally forward to field a medium hit ball



Come in fast and straighter to field a slow hit ball

KEEP LOW FOR GROUND BALLS



## CATCHING AND FIELDING DRILLS

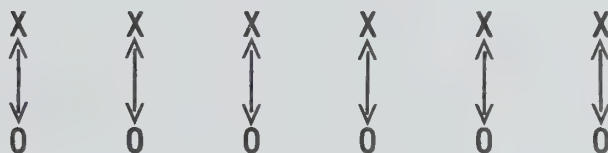
### Drill 1



- Have boys face you in a semi-circle
- Teach them how to catch a ball properly—slowly—step by step
- This done without a ball
- Once they have mastered the movements, move on to drill 2

Force boys to STAY LOW and use glove as a shovel by fielding some ground balls.

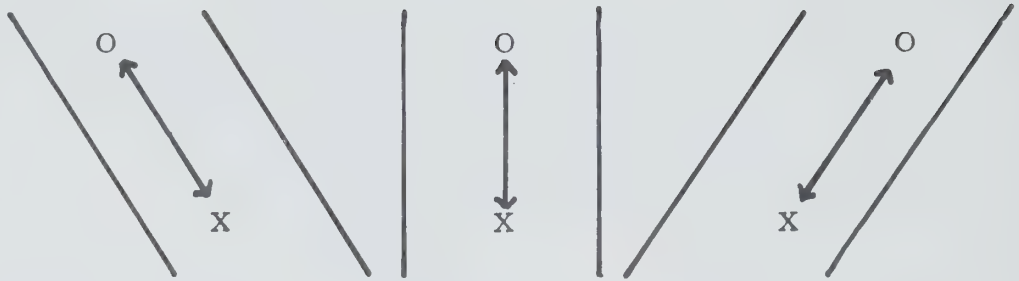
### Drill 2



- Boys face each other 25' - 30' apart
- They play catch back and forth
- Use grounders, bouncing grounders and direct throws in the air
- Later move back for short fly balls
- Move up and down checking the technique and form of each boy
- Start each boy with ten points
- He loses one for each error made
- Keep track of results

PRACTISE UNTIL THE FUNDAMENTALS BECOME SECOND NATURE

## Drill 3

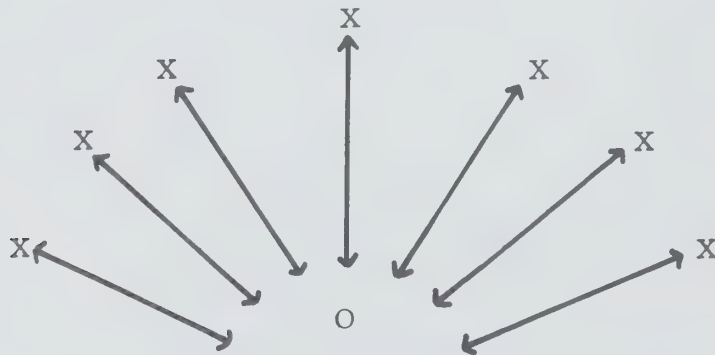


(a) Pair off boys.

- Mark off goal for each boy, 10 feet wide
- Each boy tries to throw a grounder by the other to score a goal
- Start with 10 points and lose 1 point for each goal let by

(b) Later play this on uneven ground to give players practice at handling tricky bounces.

## Drill 4 — Pepper

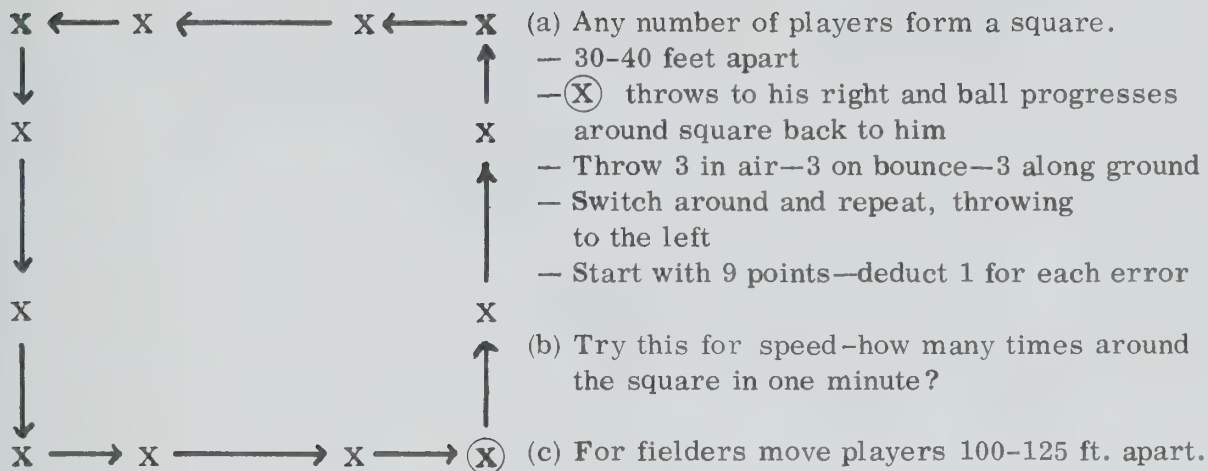


- Batter faces semi-circle of fielders
- End boy throws ball which is hit back to him along the ground
- Start with 5 points each
- Lose 1 point for each error made

AS YOU PRACTISE, SO YOU PLAY



## Drill 5



## Drill 6

Have the players take up infield positions.

The ball starts at the catcher and is thrown around the bases as follows:

C.....1B.....C.....2B.....C.....SS2.....C.....3B.....C.....

Do this against time. Then put a new squad in and repeat.

## Drill 7

Place players in infield positions.

- (a) Bat to each player who is to throw home to catcher.
- (b) Bat to 3B.....1B.....C.....3B.....C
- (c) Bat to SS.....1B.....C.....SS2.....C
- (d) Bat to 2B.....1B.....C.....2B.....C
- (e) Bat to 1B.....2(at 1B) ...C.....1B.....C

The player who fields the batted ball takes the throw from the catcher at his base as indicated.

## Drill 8

### Double Plays

Bat to 3B.....2B.....1B.....C.....3B.....C

Bat to SS.....2B.....1B.....C.....SS2.....C

Bat to 2B.....SS2.....1B.....C.....2B.....C

Bat to 1B.....SS2.....2B1.....C.....1B.....C

If you can't bat very well, then throw the ground balls to your players.

### On Infield Practice Check

- Catcher must stay behind plate.
- Stress proper footwork for first baseman (1B).
- Have 3B - SS - 2B straddle bag properly to tag runner each time they receive the ball.
- Later, if an error is made then pretend that a man is on first base and have players field the next ball hit accordingly.

A further step is to not let players know to whom the ball is going to be hit. This keeps them on their toes.

Call out a play situation:

(e.g.) "One out — man on first"

Then hit the ball to any man and see the team's response.

Check any errors.

### For Fielders

- Have someone fungo hit (hit fly balls) to your fielders.
- Stress good form, judgement and timing plus an accurate throw.
- Don't let players get careless.

Sometimes practise the infield and outfield together as a unit.

Call a play, then hit to either the infield or outfield and have them play the ball and their positions accordingly.

THERE IS NO SUBSTITUTION FOR PRACTICE



Probably the best fielding practice of all, if taken seriously, is during **BATTING PRACTICE**.

- Put the pads on your catcher.
- Work your pitchers in rotation.
- Have the players take up their own positions.
- If there is an error, then have them play the next hit accordingly.
- On fly balls to the outfield, call out the base to which you want the ball thrown. Have players assume their defensive cover-up positions.

### LEAD-UP DRILLS FOR FIELDING

#### Drill 1

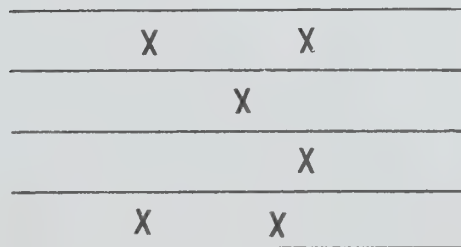


- Team members line up
- Coach and 1B face them
- Coach hits ground ball to fielder who throws to 1B
- Fielder then goes to back of line
- Each boy starts with 5 points
- Lose 1 point for each error, e.g., fumble, bad throw

#### Drill 2

##### Progressive Catching

- Draw a series of parallel lines 5-10 feet apart
- Players all start on furthest line from batter
- Ground ball is hit to each man in turn
- If fielded cleanly, player advances one line
- Every error sends him back one line
- Winner is first boy to work his way to first line



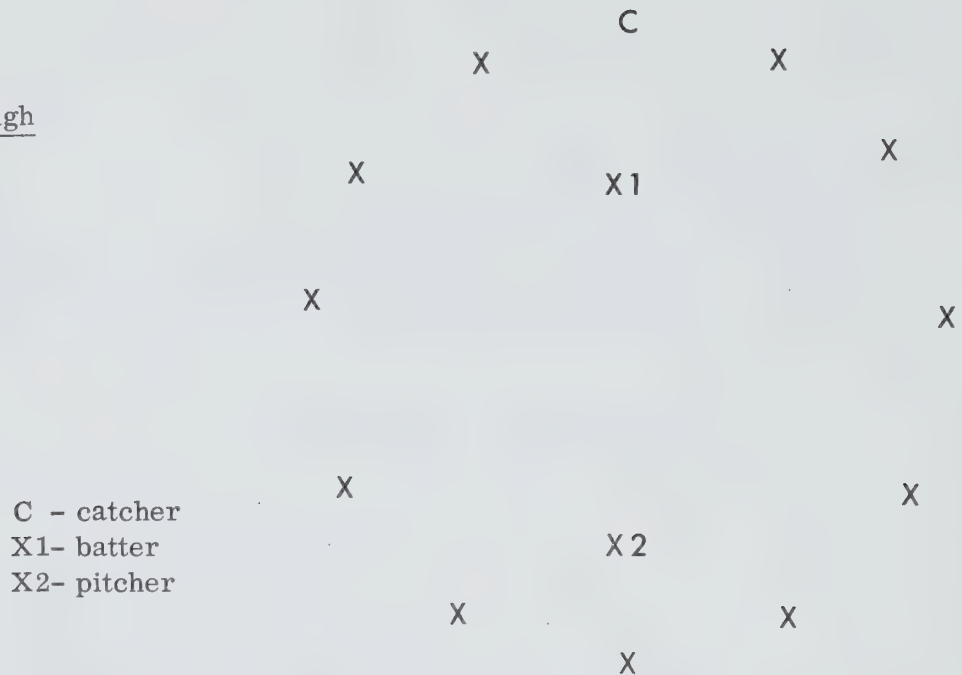
#### Drill 3

- Put nine players on each side of a volleyball net
- Ball is thrown back and forth
- Lose 1 point for each ball dropped — start with ten points
- Player must get rid of ball in 3 seconds after catching
- VARIATION — use no net, but require fly balls to be thrown

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EXPECT EVERY BALL TO COME TO YOU

## Drill 4

Hit Through

- Batter has 3 swings in which to hit ball through the fielders ringing the circle
- 1 point scored for every ball that passes below head level through the circle
- Everyone on team goes to bat, then change
- After each batter, fielders rotate clockwise — one position
- Battery also may be rotated

IF TAKEN SERIOUSLY BY THE PLAYERS AND USED WISELY BY THE COACH THIS BATTING AND FIELDING PRACTICE CAN BE THE MOST IMPORTANT TEACHING AID.

A GOOD MAN OUT OF POSITION IS BETTER THAN A POOR MAN IN POSITION



## THROWING A BALL

Every man on the team must be able to throw with speed and with accuracy.

Learning how to throw the ball accurately is the first essential of softball.

There are four basic types of throws.

- 1 UNDERARM — only when hurried and very close to the receiver
- 2 SIDEARM — when hurried
- 3 THREE-QUARTER — variation of the overhand
- 4 OVERHAND — for greatest accuracy — use this whenever possible

### Points to Check

#### Grip

- Never vary your grip
- Hold ball between thumb and first two fingers and knuckle of the third finger
- Ball does not touch palm
- Fingers grip across the seams

#### Throw

- Have body relaxed and flexible
- Keep eyes on the target throughout
- Move right foot forward slightly
- Place weight on right foot
- Step with left foot and point at target
- Keep upper arm parallel to ground
- Forearm and upper arm should form a right angle
- Stress wrist snap just before ball is released
- Allow ball to roll off the fingers
- Follow through with the hand, arm, shoulder and right leg
- Finish in a balanced position squarely facing target

Since our prime aim in throwing is accuracy, any drill which emphasizes this is of value.

### ACCURACY FIRST

## THROWING DRILLS

1. Use LINE FORMATION facing you to teach the various steps of throwing. CORRECT EACH PHASE.
2. Use the same drill of playing catch that was used for catching earlier, with two lines facing each other. CORRECT THEIR FORM.
3. Set up an old piece of canvas as a target and have boys throw 10-20 balls at it.

2	HEAD AND OVER
5	CHEST TO WAIST
4	WAIST TO KNEES
2	KNEES TO GROUND

- Total the points
  - Deduct 3 points for every thrown ball that hits the dirt or misses the target
4. Throw or hit ground balls. Have players field them and throw to target.
  5. Have player at first base throw a ground ball. While player is fielding it the first baseman calls out a specific target; e. g. , head, chest, knees. Later he may call out; head left, chest right, knees right, etc.
- This has been found to be a splendid drill for developing accuracy under game conditions.
6. Use drill number 5 above for outfielders at 150-175 feet.
    - Have them throw to base or home plate on one long bounce
    - Practise throwing to every base

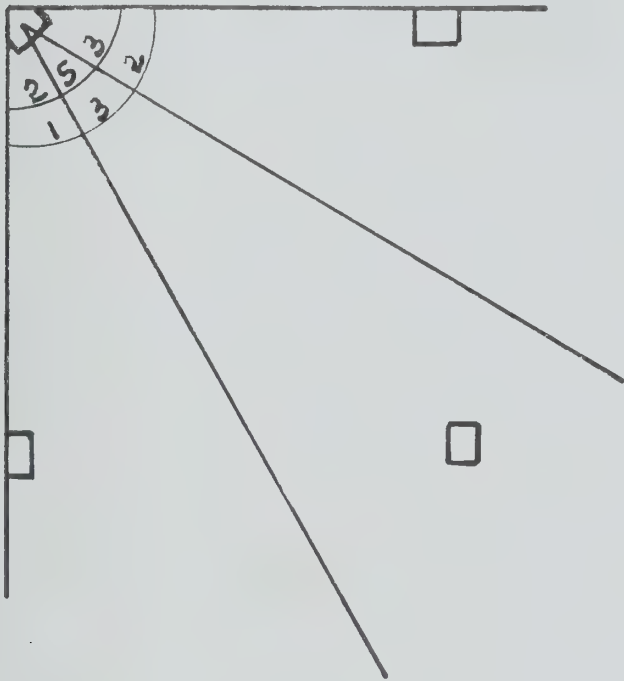
THEN COMES SPEED

7. Once players develop proficiency with the overhand throw, using drill number (5), introduce them to the:

- SIDEARM THROW
- UNDERARM THROW
- Insist that the OVERHAND throw be used whenever possible

The drills outlined for catching also involve throwing. Use them too.

#### 8. OUTFIELDER'S THROW FOR ACCURACY



- Fielders compete from their respective fields
- Field a fly ball or grounder and throw for accuracy on one long bounce
- Throw to every base in turn



## HITTING

Successful hitting skill is a combination of three factors—natural ability, confidence and the correct use of basic fundamentals.

- Choose a bat that you can control readily, neither too heavy nor too light.

There are three basic ways to grip the bat :

- 1 LONG GRIP — bat is held at the very end
  - 2 CHOKE GRIP — held 4-5 inches above the end
  - 3 MODIFIED CHOKE GRIP — held 1-2 inches from the end
- For beginners a modified choke grip is advocated

### PLATE COVERAGE

- Effective hitting area of bat is 12 inches
- Although the plate is 17 inches wide, a player may stand anywhere in the batter's box
- The bat extended to the ground should reach a point 2 inches past the far side of the plate

### STANCE

- Place rear foot at right angles to plate
- Place front foot at 45° angle to plate

### PARALLEL STANCE

- Both feet are equidistant from the plate

### CLOSED STANCE

- The front foot is closer to the plate

## HIT ACROSS THE BALL

## OPEN STANCE

- The front foot is farther away from the plate
- Beginners should start with the parallel stance.
- There should be about 12-18 inches between the inside of the front foot and the toe of the back foot

## SWING

- Stride about 6 inches to meet the pitch
- Keep weight on rear foot
- After stride, shift weight to front foot
- Hit against a stiff front leg
- Uncoil the body as the swing is made
- Swing on a horizontal plane
- Hit the ball out in front
- Left hand guides bat while right hand pushes
- Follow through
- Learn to meet the ball first, add power later

THE STRIDE PUTS YOU IN A POSITION TO HIT THE BALL

YOU DO NOT HIT ON THE STRIDE

## HITTING DRILLS

1.



## COACH

- Place players in a line in front of you.
- Mark out a home plate and the inside line of batter's box for each player.
- Have them take up a correct stance with hands on their hips.
- CORRECT INDIVIDUALLY.
- Pretend to pitch a ball and have each boy stride to meet the pitch. Later really pitch the ball.
- Have them freeze at the completion of their stride — CORRECT.
- THE STRIDE SHOULD BE CONTROLLED AND STRAIGHT AHEAD.
- PRACTISE CONTROLLED STRIDING UNTIL IT BECOMES A NATURAL REFLEX.

KEEP YOUR EYE ON THE BALL

2. Help each boy to select a bat that is best for him.
3. Show him the proper grip. USE THE SAME LINE FORMATION IN FRONT OF YOU AS FOR STRIDING
  - Have each boy grip the bat correctly. CORRECT
4. Have players assume a proper batting stance. CORRECT
5. Let players slowly go through the motions of swinging the bat.
 

<p>CORRECT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— stride</li> <li>— hips</li> <li>— shoulders and trunks</li> <li>— head and eyes</li> </ul>	<p>CORRECT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>— wrist snap</li> <li>— path of bat during swing</li> <li>— follow through</li> </ul>
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  - Pitch an imaginary ball and have the players swing at it
6. Having taught the correct swing, start pitching slowly to the batter.
  - Gradually increase the speed until he is hitting at game speed.
7. They don't throw "lobs" in a game so why throw "lobs" in batting practice? The more closely you can simulate game conditions, the easier boys will hit game pitching.  
CORRECT CONSTANTLY during batting practice. Don't let players get sloppy.
8. Have players call where their hits will be.
9. To learn to hit speedball pitching, have the pitcher move closer and closer to the batter.
10. Position extra players in the "gaps" around the infield. Have players try to hit to these men.
11. To strengthen hitting muscles, each player should spend some time each day swinging a heavy bat.
12. To acquire a "hitting eye" have boy stand at the plate without a bat and call out where the pitch will cross the plate as he sees it in flight from the pitcher. Later add the bat.

AS IN CATCHING AND FIELDING, BATTING PRACTICE CAN BE THE MOST EFFECTIVE WAY OF TEACHING AND CORRECTING HITTING TECHNIQUES IF THE PLAYERS TAKE IT SERIOUSLY



## BATTING PRACTICE

Each man hits fair balls, a sacrifice bunt, and a bunt for a base hit. After the last, he takes the turn at first and slides into second base. Each player should come to bat twice during batting practice.

This is not sufficient batting practice to develop hitting proficiency. The players must find time either in or out of practice to spend extra time on this all-important fundamental.

## BUNTING

Bunting is the least stressed skill in minor softball and yet is the most effective offense manoeuvre against inexperienced players.

Every player should learn how to lay down a bunt correctly.

Surprise is an essential for bunting successfully.

## BUNTING TECHNIQUES

### Hands

- As pivot is made, the upper hand slides along the bat to a position close to the trade-mark
- The lower hand remains steady
- The bat is gripped lightly between the thumb and four fingers
- Forearm is parallel to ground while upper arm and forearm approximate a right angle
- Keep bat level
- Adjust to height of pitch by raising or lowering your body
- Let the ball hit the bat
- The ball will force the bat into the "V" between the thumb and fingers thus deadening the impact
- Keep your eyes on the ball throughout

There are two types of bunts:

### Sacrifice

- Used to advance a runner who is on base
- The body is pivoted square to the pitcher just before the ball is released
- Do not attempt to bunt a high pitch

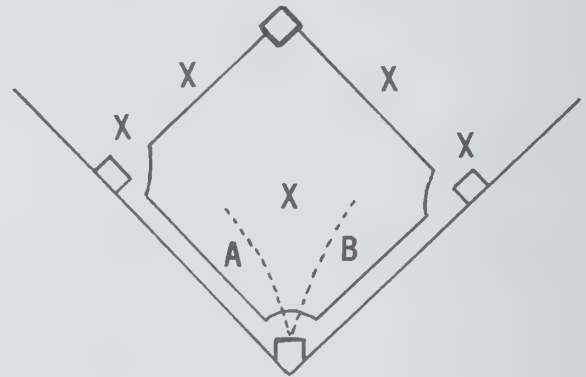
## STEP TO THE PLATE WITH CONFIDENCE

### Bunt for a Base Hit

- Deception is important
- Delay your shift as long as possible
- Don't pivot
- Just step toward the pitch with your forward foot and bring the bat into bunting position
- The bunting technique is the same for the sacrifice bunt

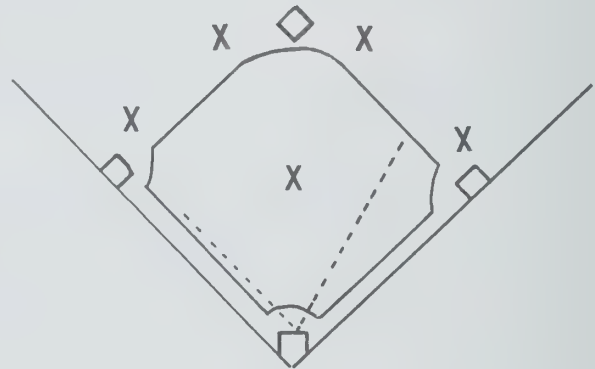
### PLACEMENT OF SACRIFICE BUNTS

- 1B occupied - - - - -
- 1B and 2B occupied A
- 2B occupied A B
- or bunt ball hard toward 3B



### SHORT AND LONG BUNTS FOR HITS

- Place short bunts along the 3B line
- Place long bunts between the pitcher and 1B

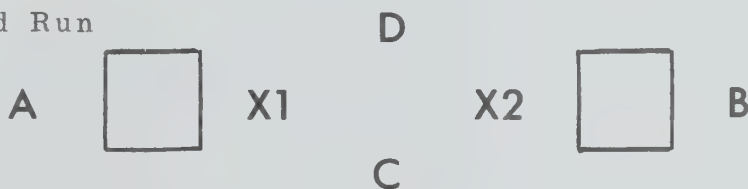


BALANCE IS THE KEY TO HITTING

## BUNTING DRILLS

1. Use your LINE FORMATION facing you again to teach the proper bunting technique STEP BY STEP.
3. Pair off the boys.  
— One pitches and one bunts. CORRECT EACH STEP
3. Speed up the pitching and repeat drill number 2.
4. Practise placing bunts along the first and third base lines.
5. Learn to push a bunt out slowly between the pitcher and first base, and the pitcher and third base.
6. Have player bunt and start to run around the bases. Whoever fields the bunt must throw to 1B who throws to 2B...3B...C...1B...2B...3B...C. Player gets 1 point for each base he touches before the ball is thrown around the infield twice. This is a good all-round drill for bunting, fielding, base running, throwing and catching.

7. Bunt and Run



- A and B are pitchers
- C and D are fielders
- X1 and X2 are BUNTERS
- Bases are 50-60 feet apart
- A pitches to X2 who bunts
- X1 and X2 attempt to exchange bases, leaving bats behind
- A B C D attempt to field ball and put X1 or X2 out by touching base before the runner
- Positions are rotated progressively with each out

A variation is to have 3 teams — X1 and X2, A and B, C and D.

Count number of runs X1 and X2 make before A B C D put them out 3 times. Each team has its inning.

8. Have players take turns bunting and trying to beat out the bunt.
9. Put runner on first base and have batter try to advance him with a sacrifice bunt.

**HOLD THE BAT STILL— DON'T BE A "WAGGLER"**



## OFFENSIVE SOFTBALL

Offence, like defence, is composed of certain basic fundamentals. The correct execution of these skills forms the basis of sound offence.

Most teams do not spend enough time with HITTING practice.

Use the drills described under the section on HITTING.

### BASE RUNNING

Suffice to add that every player becomes a potential base runner the moment he steps into the batter's box. The way he leaves the plate, rounds bases, or steals may be the deciding factor in the game.

Teach your players always to be conscious of the number of outs, the score, the innings, and the bases occupied. Watch the runner ahead.

### ON FLY BALLS

On short flies, manoeuvre to a "half way" position. From here it is possible to return or advance, depending upon whether or not the fly is caught.

On long fly balls "tag up", that is, hold your base until you see what develops.

### STEALING BASES

A long lead-off is not always necessary to steal bases. More important is the ability to size up the situation and possibilities, then get away fast.

When the ball is delivered, a runner should be in motion towards second but always under control so that he may return to the base if necessary.

### WATCH FOR

- Wild throws by pitcher — catcher drawn out of position
- Laxity on part of defence
- Lob return from catcher to pitcher
- Defensive men out of position

### SPEED AND HUSTLE

## TIPS FOR STEALING BASES

- Don't steal with a weak hitter at bat
- Don't steal when you are a few runs behind

## HIT AND RUN

With a man on first base or men on first and second and 3 balls — 1 strike or 3 balls — 2 strikes the hit and run play is very effective.

If the opposition has a substantial lead, it is often wiser to take fewer chances. Look for the coach's signal.

## BUNTING

- See bunting diagrams under section on bunting
- Remember — if a team "sags", bunt

## SIGNALS

- Boys get a "kick" out of using signals like the big leaguers
- Keep them to a few and keep them simple
- Every player should know them perfectly
- Signals originate from the coach

Steal — clasp peak of cap

Hit and Run — right hand on hip

Double Steal — thumbs in belt loops

Bunting — requires no signal since a batter is usually told to bunt before he goes to the plate

These are but a few suggestions. Make up your own to suit your particular needs.

## GET ON BASE

## A SUGGESTED BATTING ORDER

- #1 Number one must be a "waiter" with a keen eye. He must reach first base at any cost. He should be a good bunter and a smart base runner.
- #2 His is the "sacrifice" position. He must be skilful at bunting and be a "place" hitter.
- #3 & #4 They should be the heavy hitters, capable of driving in runs. Other things being equal, number 3 should be the faster of the two.
- #5 If you have another slugger he is number 5.
- #6 He is the second "lead off" man, a fast runner. He must be a stronger hitter than number 1 since he finds more men on base when he comes to bat.
- #7 He should be a bunter and a place hitter. Other things being equal, he will be slower than number 2.
- #8 & #9 These are usually not strong hitters. The pitcher is often the ninth hitter, but this need not be an inflexible rule.

You will find the best order for your players from experience as the season progresses.

RUN OUT EVERY HIT



## BASE RUNNING

A team that can hustle on the base paths is going to be a tough team to beat.

Not enough attention is given to this important phase of baseball.

### A FEW TIPS FOR BASE RUNNERS

- Don't stop to look. Hit the ball and run.
- Turn into foul territory, unless ball goes to the outfield. You may be put out if you turn towards second base.
- Once on base, locate the ball before you lead off.
- Touch bases with whichever foot is most convenient and natural. Left foot preferred.
- Lean to the left and touch the inside edge of the base.
- Pivot towards the next base.
- Take the shortest possible route.
- Touch every base.
- Take an 8 foot lead-off with a right-hander and a 6 foot with a left-handed pitcher.
- Lead off third base into foul territory.

### THERE ARE TWO TYPES OF SLIDES USED

#### 1. Straight

- This is used on a force play
- Is the quickest way of reaching the base
- Get your body down, relax, turn your forward ankle up

#### 2. Hook

- This is used when you are apt to be tagged
- Run straight at the base then fade away
- Hook to the side AWAY from the baseman
- Keep the forward foot up
- Hook the bag with the back foot

BE ALERT, WATCH FOR SIGNALS

## DRILLS

Drill 1 Who can bunt and circle the bases fastest?

Drill 2 Have the runner on first base head for second on the pitch.

- Catcher makes the throw to second
- Do the same from second to third
- This is good practice for everyone involved

Drill 3 Have teams of 3.

- Start timing when first man leaves home plate
- Stop timing when third man touches home plate

Drill 4 Relay Race

- Have teams of 4
- The player of A team starts from home plate
  - B team starts from first base
  - C team starts from second base
  - D team starts from third base
- Second player starts when first runner touches starting base
- The first team to have all four men complete the base tour wins

Drill 5 Have each boy take a turn at running the bases during infield practice. This more closely approaches an actual game situation.

Drill 6 Practise sliding in tennis shoes into a soft broad-jumping pit. Master the technique of sliding both to the left and right. Then repeat wearing spikes.

Drill 7



X1

O1  
X2



O1  
X1

O2  
X2



- X1 and X2 are defensive players
- O1 is a base runner
- O1 attempts to steal using hook slides when necessary
- X1 and X2 throw ball back and forth
- Another base runner O2 may be added
- O1 and O2 then try to change bases while X1 and X2 throw the ball back and forth. Later change around.

DON'T TAKE UNNECESSARY CHANCES

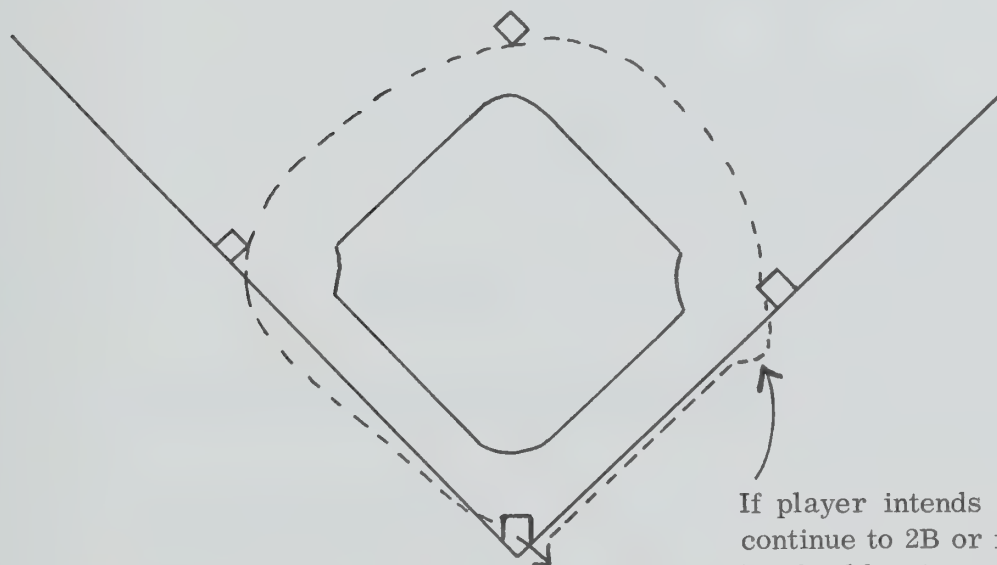
Drill 8 Use some of the drills for bunting as base running drills also.

Drill 9 Base Running Relay

- Batter stands at home plate
- Pitcher holds the ball
- Batter runs to first base whenever he is ready
- Pitcher throws to catcher who throws to first base-second-third-home
- Infield must try to have the ball reach one of the four bases ahead of the runner
- Runner gets 1 point for every base he reaches ahead of the ball
- Each man on a team has a turn at running
- Change around offensive and defensive teams
- The highest number of points wins

Drill 10 Runner starts to run the bases. On a signal from the coach the catcher throws to the base immediately ahead of the runner.  
Stress — throwing, catching, sliding, tagging.

Drill 11



As you round base try to hit inside edge with whichever foot is most convenient and natural in your stride.

If player intends to continue to 2B or farther, he should swing out to the right and take a couple of steps into foul territory. This flattens the arc and shortens the route.

NEVER STEAL WHEN YOUR TEAM IS BEHIND MORE THAN TWO RUNS,  
UNLESS YOU ARE ABSOLUTELY SURE YOU CAN MAKE IT

## DEFENSIVE STRATEGY

In minor league baseball, or any baseball for that matter, the team which executes the fundamental game skills best will usually win.

However, baseball, like any other sport, has become a science. Plays and strategies have been developed.

A few of the more basic plays are briefly covered here.

Most of the action in baseball occurs through the centre of the diamond. Therefore, it naturally follows that a team's strength should lie through that area. A wise coach will put his best men at catcher, pitcher, second base, shortstop and centre field.

DEFENSIVE and OFFENSIVE plays should be used with great caution in minor league baseball. You, as coach, will know best when your team is ready to handle more complicated strategy. But don't underestimate the intelligence of young boys. Besides they feel "big league" when they use plays no matter how simple.

### DEFENSIVE TIPS

- Every player should be in his right position — always.
- Don't throw the ball unnecessarily. If there is no chance to make the play, then hold the ball.
- EVERY PLAYER SHOULD KNOW WHAT HE WILL DO WITH THE BALL IF IT COMES TO HIM.
- EVERY PLAYER SHOULD KNOW AT ALL TIMES THE SCORE, INNINGS, OUTS, MEN ON BASE, STRIKES AND BALLS.
- Be on the alert for "signals".
- WHEN A RUNNER IS IN SCORING POSITION FIELDERS MUST BE READY to make a throw to home plate should the ball be hit to them.

### THE INTENTIONAL PASS

Use this play cautiously in minor league baseball.

It is sometimes effective with a runner on second base or runners on second and third bases. Double play possibilities are thus increased.

It is often wise to pass a good hitter if the next batter is weak.

### TEACH THE RULES WHENEVER POSSIBLE



## CLOSING IN THE INFIELD

When an infield moves in close a .250 hitter becomes a .500 hitter.

Therefore, a team should only close in under extreme circumstances, that is, when they cannot afford to allow a run to score.

In other situations, the best policy is to play your team moderately deep to deep depending upon their throwing arms.

With less than two out and the winning run on third base the outfielders should move in as the infielders do.

Every player should back up the bases and men for whom he is responsible on ALL throws.

Every player should learn the BACK UP positions and the CUT-OFF positions.

## PITCH OUT

The "pitch out" is a ball pitched wide of the plate. It is done in order to allow the catcher to throw to one of the bases for any reason.

The catcher gives the pitcher the signal. The important thing is for the pitcher to throw the ball to such a position that the batter cannot possibly hit it.

## DEFENSIVE DRILLS

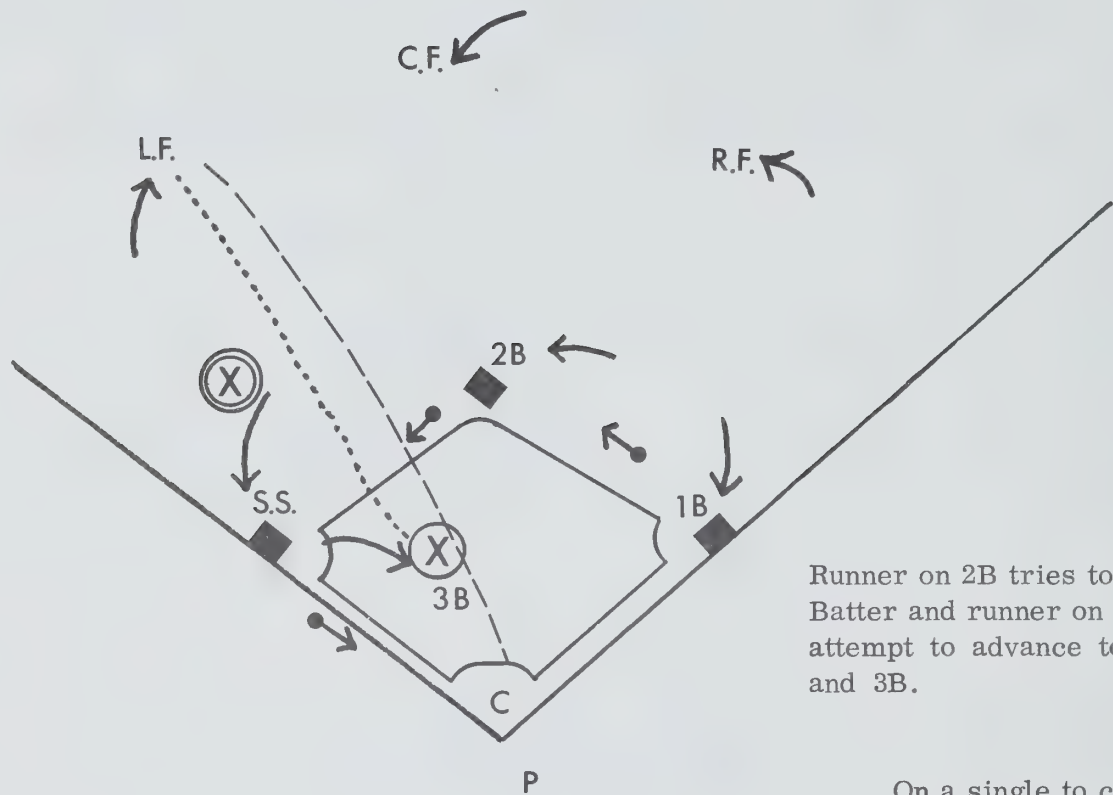
Many drills were outlined under the section on fundamentals.

Most of these can be used to teach sound defensive principles since all defense is based upon the execution of the fundamentals discussed.

1. Get your boys to analyze the weaknesses of the opponents. It makes them think and heightens their interest.
2. Set up game situations (e. g.) man on first — none out — fungo hit the ball to a specific field and have the players defend against this.
3. Once the basic principles and moves have been learned, you can hit the ball anywhere, and see how the players react.

EVERY BASE SHOULD BE COVERED ON ALL PLAYS

## DEFENCE AGAINST A SINGLE TO LEFT FIELD



Runner on 2B tries to score.  
Batter and runner on 1B  
attempt to advance to 2B  
and 3B.

On a single to centre  
or right field the 1B  
acts as cut-off man.

When throw is to 3B, the 3B  
covers the bag. Pitcher  
backs up 3B. S.S. takes  
cut-off position X.

----- Batted ball  
..... Thrown ball  
————— Path of fielder



Cut-off position



Cut-off position when throw is to 3B.

EVERY BASE SHOULD BE COVERED ON ALL PLAYS

## PLAYING THE VARIOUS POSITIONS

### CATCHER

The catcher is the key strategist on the defence in any team.

He is the brains of the team. His game sense should improve with experience.

### A FEW TIPS FOR THE CATCHER

- Get your catcher the best equipment possible
- Help him to gain confidence in easy stages
- Start him catching alone
- Add a "dummy" batter
- Have him swing and miss
- Only after the catcher's confidence has been built should you let the batter really start hitting

### INSTRUCT THE CATCHER TO

- Keep his eyes open.
- Get as close to the plate as possible.
- Keep the signal well covered.
- Straddle the plate, left foot slightly ahead.
- Keep his bare hand closed until the ball is in the glove.
- Hold his glove as a steady target.
- Not to throw if he is sure that it is too late to make the play.
- Practise throwing off the mask swiftly.
- Hold it until he locates the ball. (He may trip on it.)
- Back up the bases.
- Give a high target when he thinks the batter will bunt.
- Learn to field bunts. If it rolls into foul territory, grab it fast.
- Keep the pitcher relaxed and working slowly.
- Study the weaknesses of opposing batters.
- Take only one step when throwing.
- Remember that the WRIST SNAP is all-important in throwing.
- Develop smooth footwork when shifting.
- Avoid arguing with the umpire.
- On a throw to home, block the plate once he has the ball.
- Swing the fielders whenever he knows that it is necessary.

### TALK IT UP

## DRILLS

1. Put up a target 7 feet high and at a distance of 65 feet for official distance. (Adjust for shorter base distances and for softball.)
2. Set a bushel basket on second base. Have catcher try to score a basket on his throw from behind home plate.
3. Set the basket on each base in turn. A catcher must be able to throw accurately to any base.
4. Rotate your catchers as you do your pitchers during batting practice.
  - Don't let them tire and get sloppy before you relieve them
  - Most of the other drills involve the catcher
  - Insist in all practices that the catcher make his throws from behind the plate

## FIRST BASE

Find a tall, rangy boy with a sure pair of hands for this position.

### A Few Tips For The First Baseman

- Select a glove to suit the boy
- Work for a half hour each day on footwork and on the stretch to meet the throw
- Stretch to meet every throw
- On low throws use the glove as a stationary shovel
- Practise on the "tough ones"
- If the throw is to your left, stride to meet it with the left foot; if to the right, stride with the right foot
- Keep your eye on the ball
- Know where the base is at all times
- Watch for the catcher's signal for a throw from the pitcher with a runner on first base
- Be alert for bunts
- Develop an underarm throw to third base on bunts
- Play closer to the baseline on left-handed batters
- Always know the score, the outs, and the strike count on the batter

### Duties of The First Baseman

1. No one on — play 10 feet back and 12 feet in from the baseline

KEEP THE PITCHER CALM



2. Man on first, none out — stay at the base — look for a throw from the pitcher — move in on bunt
3. Men on first and second, none away — stay 10 feet back and 10 feet in from baseline — look for bunt or double play possibility
4. Bases full, none out — move in to cut off the run at home plate
5. Man on first, one out — don't expect a bunt — move away from the base with the pitch — look for double play
6. Men on first and second, one out — worry runner by dashing toward bag — look for throw from catcher — or double play
7. With men on base and two out — play behind the runner

During batting practice have him play first base. This is the best practice that he can get.

## SECOND BASE

The second baseman must be fast and alert with an accurate but not necessarily a strong arm.

### A Few Tips For The Second Baseman

- When tagging a runner, keep the feet behind the base
- Hold the ball in your glove hand in front of the base so that the runner tags himself
- Run down a runner toward the base from which he came
- Develop an underhand throw
- Practise hard on double play sequences with the shortstop and first baseman
- Help relay throws from deep right field
- Learn the cover-up positions
- Step either inside or outside of the baseline to avoid slider's spikes on double plays

### Duties of The Second Baseman

1. Man on first, none out — hold position until bunt then move over to cover first base
2. Men on first and second, none out — same as 1
3. Bases full, none out — same as 1

## KNOW THE COVER-UP POSITIONS

4. Men on base with one out — look for double play
5. In other situations play your position
6. In all double play situations in which shortstop or third baseman handle the ball, cover second

### THIRD BASE

The "hot corner" requires an alert boy with a strong arm.

#### A Few Tips For The Third Baseman

- Read those for the second baseman

#### Duties of the Third Baseman

1. Runner on first, none away —play in close to handle bunt
2. Runners on first and second, none away — cover third base unless bunt is very hard
3. Man on third, ground ball — throw home LOW to catch sliding runner
4. Let the shortstop handle "Texas Leaguers" back of third base
5. Move in on left-handed hitters who can bunt
6. Chase every foul fly in your territory

### SHORTSTOP

He must have the strongest arm in the infield, be fast and have a sure pair of hands.

#### A Few Tips For The Shortstop

- Time won't allow him to "bobble" the ball
- Pick up the ball cleanly and get it away fast and accurately
- Move closer to second on left-handed and late hitters
- (Read tips for the second baseman)

FIELDING IS THE RESPONSIBILITY OF EVERY MAN

### Duties of The Shortstop

1. Know the infield fly rule
2. Know the cover-up positions
3. Know positions on double plays
4. Back up the pitcher
5. Cover third when third baseman handles a bunt
6. Feint at the runner on second base
7. Runners on first and second base, none away — cover third base on the bunt
8. On long hits run out into the outfield to help relay the ball into the infield

### OUTFIELDERS

Train all boys as infielders then place three of them in the outfield

### A Few Tips For The Outfielders

- If the fly ball must bounce be sure it bounces in front of you
- Study the wind each inning
- Get the ball into the infield quickly
- Call out 'I've got it' on fly balls to you to avoid confusion
- Throw the ball no higher than 10 feet off the ground
- Go after every foul fly ball
- Get your body in front of ground balls
- Practise throwing for accuracy
- Throw the ball into the infield on one bounce
- Keep your eye on the ball
- Talk it up — be alert — stay in the game

### Duties of The Outfielders

1. No one on base, none out — get ball in to second base as quickly as possible
2. Man on first base, none out — throw to third base

3. Man on second, regardless of outs — try to cut the run off at the plate. The pitcher will "cut off" the throw, if he sees it is impossible to get the runner at home plate, and play the hitter going to second base
4. Cover bases on every infield throw

Give outfielders a specific job to do on each play. Make them feel important.

## PITCHER

On defence the pitcher is the most important man on the team. A wise coach will give careful individual attention to his pitchers.

### A Few Tips For The Pitcher

The key points to check are :

- Control is the most important fundamental of good pitching
- Develop a fast ball
- Later add a curve ball
- Keep the ball hidden
- Keep the eyes on the target
- Stress the wrist snap
- Practise until the wind-up and delivery become one smooth co-ordinated and uninterrupted movement
- Perfect the footwork, stances and deliveries used with and without men on base
- Follow through and finish in a square position facing the batter ready to field any ball hit
- Relax and take plenty of time between pitches
- Throwing a slow ball occasionally makes his fast ball look faster and throws the batter off balance
- Keep the fast ball high and inside
- Learn to field the position
- Back up the bases
- Study the opposing batters to note weaknesses
- Bear down on weak hitters and get them out of the way
- Always warm up properly and sufficiently before a practice or game
- CONTROL means being able to throw to any part of the strike area whenever he wants to

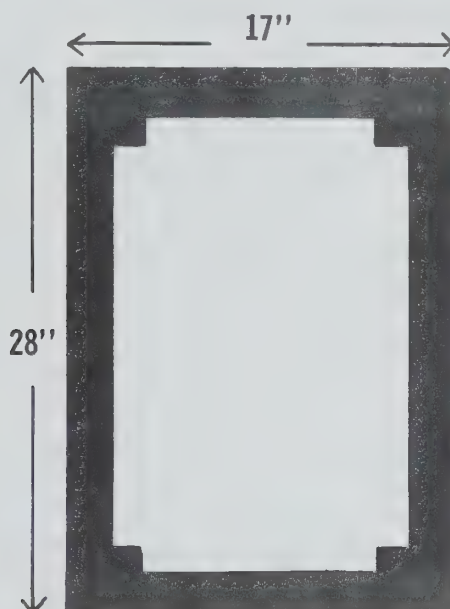
ALWAYS KNOW THE SCORE, INNINGS, OUTS, STRIKES



## Pitching Drills For Control

The strike area extends from the knees to the shoulders and across the width of the plate (approximately 30" x 17").

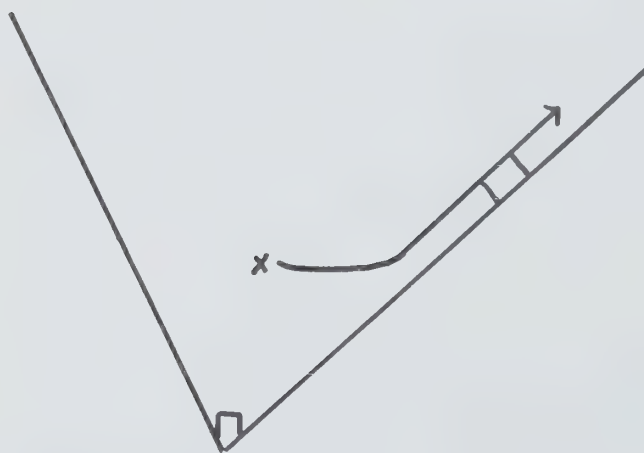
Note the accompanying diagram. The blackened area is the real strike area. For effective pitching a player must learn to hit the black areas at will.



1. Take a piece of old canvas and paint on the above target. Have your pitchers practise hitting the black areas. Give points and make it competitive.
2. Stand the catcher directly behind the home plate.
  - His glove is at stomach level.
  - The pitcher aims at one of the catcher's knees or shoulders.
  - The catcher moves the glove only at the last moment
  - Place special emphasis upon hitting the catcher's left shoulder because this is the important high inside spot for a right hand batter.

KNOW WHAT YOU WILL DO IF THE BALL COMES TO YOU

3. A variation is to have the catcher hold his glove as a target in these strike areas
  - He moves it only if necessary
4. Get a team-mate to stand at the plate as a strike target without swinging
5. Rotate your pitchers during batting practice
  - Have them warm up well before they go on the mound
  - Don't work them for too long and never on consecutive days
6. Have your pitchers take turns at fielding their position during infield practice
  - On off days have them work out with the outfielders for conditioning
7. Minor league boys should be hitters as well as pitchers
8. Any time that a ball is hit to the right side of the diamond, the pitcher should break towards first base.



— Run parallel to the baseline on the approach

— Tag base and continue a few steps to avoid collision

## SOFTBALL PITCHING

Read "Pitching Tips" preceding this section. The same fundamentals apply to softball pitchers. Use the same drills, only adapt them to softball distances.

POSITION — Read the rules which apply to the pitching stance and delivery.

GRIP — Start out with the four-finger grip on the ball.  
— Later, change to a three-finger grip after control has been learned.

CONTROL — Practise pitching to a target. (See drills.)

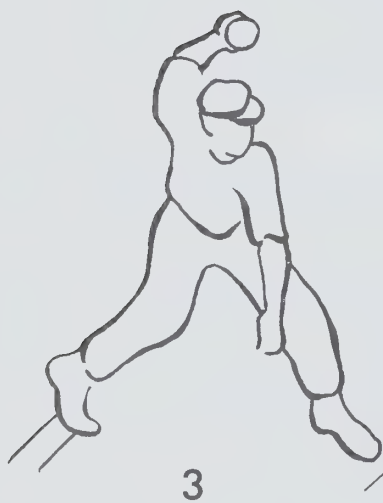
### DELIVERY

#### Starting Position

1. Stand relaxed with both feet touching the rubber.  
— Ball is held in relaxed, extended hands in front of the body  
— Eyes on the target
2. Left hand lets go of the ball as right arm carries it around behind the body.  
— Weight is on the right foot  
— Body leans slightly forward to commence the stride
3. Body has twisted so that left shoulder is towards the batter.  
— Right arm is cocked at top of wind-up
4. Stride has been taken, but arm is still BEHIND the body.
5. This is the unleashing of the power for the pitch.
6. Ball has just been released.  
— Follow through continues
7. The body follows the right arm.  
— Pitcher will end up in a square stance facing the batter, ready to field any ball hit.

MAKE THE DELIVERY SMOOTH AND RHYTHMICAL

## THE SOFTBALL PITCH





## GETTING MORE OUT OF PRACTICES

The game is just the culmination of all your practices. You cannot teach boys new things during Saturday's game. What they have learned and repeatedly practised all week is what they will do in the game.

THE MORE CLOSELY THAT YOU SIMULATE GAME CONDITIONS, THE BETTER RESULTS YOUR PRACTICES WILL PRODUCE.

Look the part of a coach. Wear a baseball uniform or at least spikes and slacks plus a cap. Don't walk onto the field in a business suit. It means a lot to young impressionable boys.

Be sure that your diamond is in good condition.

Mark out the base lines and batter's box.

Get bases and keep them dusted.

Have plenty of balls on hand. Keep all your players active.

YOU LEARN BY DOING.

Make your practices FUN. This is a game — recreation. It should be enjoyable, not tedious and laborious.

Dress up your practices with some of the drills, stunts and competitive games suggested. Add some of your own.

END YOUR PRACTICE WHILE PLAYERS ARE STILL EAGER FOR MORE.

Devote three-quarters of your time to fundamentals and drills and one quarter to an actual baseball scrimmage. Work your best battery against your first team — second battery against the second team.

Know what you want to accomplish. Plan your practice carefully beforehand. Draw up a flexible outline. Take a few minutes before practice starts to bring the players together and outline the day's plan for them.

Give individual attention, as much as time will allow. Once you have taught and corrected, place some responsibility upon the boy to work on his own time.

Be sure to have boys pair off and work together, correcting one another. It eases your burden and helps them to think about how they perform a skill.

PRACTICE OF THE RIGHT TECHNIQUES MAKES PERFECT

Get the boys to help dress up the diamond. It gives them pride and interest in the field.

Establish the practice of having players constructively criticize mistakes that they observe in others.

Make specific suggestions to players for "homework".

Give praise whenever it is DESERVED. Recognition is something that everyone needs.

Don't trust to your memory. Carry a notebook and jot things down as you observe them or else they will escape you.

After practice move off under a tree and talk over strategy and give the players an informal quiz and rules quiz. Get them thinking and talking baseball. DESIRE is one of the leading factors in building players.

#### A SAMPLE PRACTICE OUTLINE — Practice — June 13

##### AVON PANTHERS

- 6.45 - 7.00 — Free time for early boys
- 7.00 - 7.05 — Briefly discuss last night's game  
Outline tonight's practice
- 7.05 - 7.40 — Batting practice with players in their positions

- CHECK — Joe's throw from shortstop
- Ed 2B isn't stepping out of baseline on double plays
- Bill 1B is playing too close to his base
- Pete stepping away from curve balls on his swing
- Ed work on high pitches

- PITCHERS — Target drill
- Use Ted — John — Sam — Steve for batting practice  
(Joe pitched last night — lay off)

- 7.40 - 7.55 — Work on defence:)
- Bunts ) infield
- Double plays )
- Fungo for outfield
- Keep throws down lower on return to infield
- 7.55 - 8.05 — Work on cut-off plays with runner on second and single to any field  
(Poor last night)
- 8.05 - 8.30 — Scrimmage
- Pitch — Sam — John
- 8.30 — Team quiz on defence
- Run over signals

## COACHING AIDS

A good coach is constantly looking for new and better ways to put across ideas to his players. From experience, coaches have found a few "extras" that have enabled them to do a more effective job.

Here are a few:

### Notebook

Don't trust to your memory — carry a notebook with you to jot down errors, ideas, and memos to yourself.

### Mirror

When boys are learning new skills have them perform before a mirror. Other people can see his mistakes, but once a boy himself is able to see them they take on new meaning. Watch the improvement.

### Films

- In education, films have become as standard as the old "primer". It has been experimentally proven that films make teaching more meaningful and learning easier. A smart coach will procure films to show his teams. Watch interest perk and fundamentals take on more meaning for the players.
- Films may be procured through the physical education teacher at the local high school, from the Canadian Film Institute at Ottawa (rental fee), or through the district representative of the Youth and Recreation Branch. (No rental fee, just express charges.)
- Take advantage of these opportunities. Once you have tried films they will become standard equipment with you.

### Charting

Football and basketball coaches have been using charts effectively for many years. You as a coach of softball or baseball can employ them advantageously too.

- BUT — UNLESS YOU USE THE RESULTS FROM CHARTING YOU ARE WASTING YOUR TIME.

## SIMULATE GAME CONDITIONS

### Charting Hits

Make a diagram of a diamond.

- Chart accurately every hit and bunt made during the game
- Draw an arrow to trace the path of the ball
- Locate the infielder involved by an X
- This will indicate:
  - Weakness in your defence
  - Where a particular pitcher is being hit most
  - Whether a defensive player was out of position
  - When the ball was hit

Make a master chart to give you an analysis of your team's play at a glance.

Offensively, the score book gives you your information.

#### DEFENCE

NAME	FIELDING CHANCE	PICKED CLEANLY	BOBBLED	PUT OUT	ERROR	CAUGHT OUT OF POSITION

- Have enough lines horizontally for 14 players.
- Leave 2 or 3 vertical spaces empty so that additional items can be added as you find the need arises.

### Bulletin Board

- A bulletin board is easy to make and an invaluable coaching aid.
- Have your manager post the batting averages and the fielding averages as taken from the chart.
- Chart your practices. It makes boys work harder.
- In posting results, don't pit one player against another, but rather the boy against himself — what he got last week against what he got this week. The self-improvement angle is emphasized.

BREAK DOWN THE FUNDAMENTALS INTO EASY STEPS



- In this way, even your best hitter and best fielder have room to improve since they too are competing against themselves, and their past records.
- Also post mottos from week to week. Give them impact.
- Post articles, and testimonials by baseball "greats" as a form of inspiration.
- Post the newspaper account of the game, BUT alongside post the charts of the game. Often the charts indicate the real heroes of the game. This technique keeps head sizes down to normal.

## BASEBALL TEE

The "tee" has been described as the greatest teaching aid ever devised for improving hitting in baseball and softball.

Not only do the players find the "tee" fascinating to use, but it is of inestimable value in teaching stance, plate coverage, striding, hip action, pivoting, swinging, etc. Players can concentrate upon their weaknesses by placing the ball in any desired position.

The "tee" is not produced commercially. However, it is easy to make one. All you need is:"

- 2 pieces of wood 2" x 4" x 24" long
- 2 - 6" carriage bolts
- 1 broom handle ( 1" diameter ) x 37" long
- 1 broom handle ( 1" diameter ) x 25" long  
( NOTE — Metal pipes may be substituted  
for the broom handle )
- 1 piece of rubber hose 6" long  
( This must be corded hose with a 1" bore )

The broom handle inserts into the rubber hose to a depth of 3" as shown in the accompanying diagram.

The diagram is intended as a guide and for this reason has been kept as simple as possible. If you find it necessary to add four small feet at right angles to the base to steady it, then do so. Adopt the suggested structure to meet your needs.

The height of the ball is adjusted by loosening the wingnuts and sliding the broom handle up or down.

It will be necessary to have two broom handles as indicated to take care of the extreme high and low positions when teeing up the ball.

## STRIVE FOR A CONTROLLED STRIDE

## USING THE TEE

When first using the tee have the batsman face into the screen or have him hit into a piece of hanging canvas.

Teach the correct hitting technique before you let a player graduate to the "tee". Hold it out as an incentive to them.

It has been found best to start by placing the ball low and slowly working upward. Practise on all types of pitches and then concentrate on the player's particular weakness.

For an inside pitch, place the tee 12" in front of the plate in line with the inside corner.

For a pitch down the middle, place the tee 6" in front of the plate in line with the center.

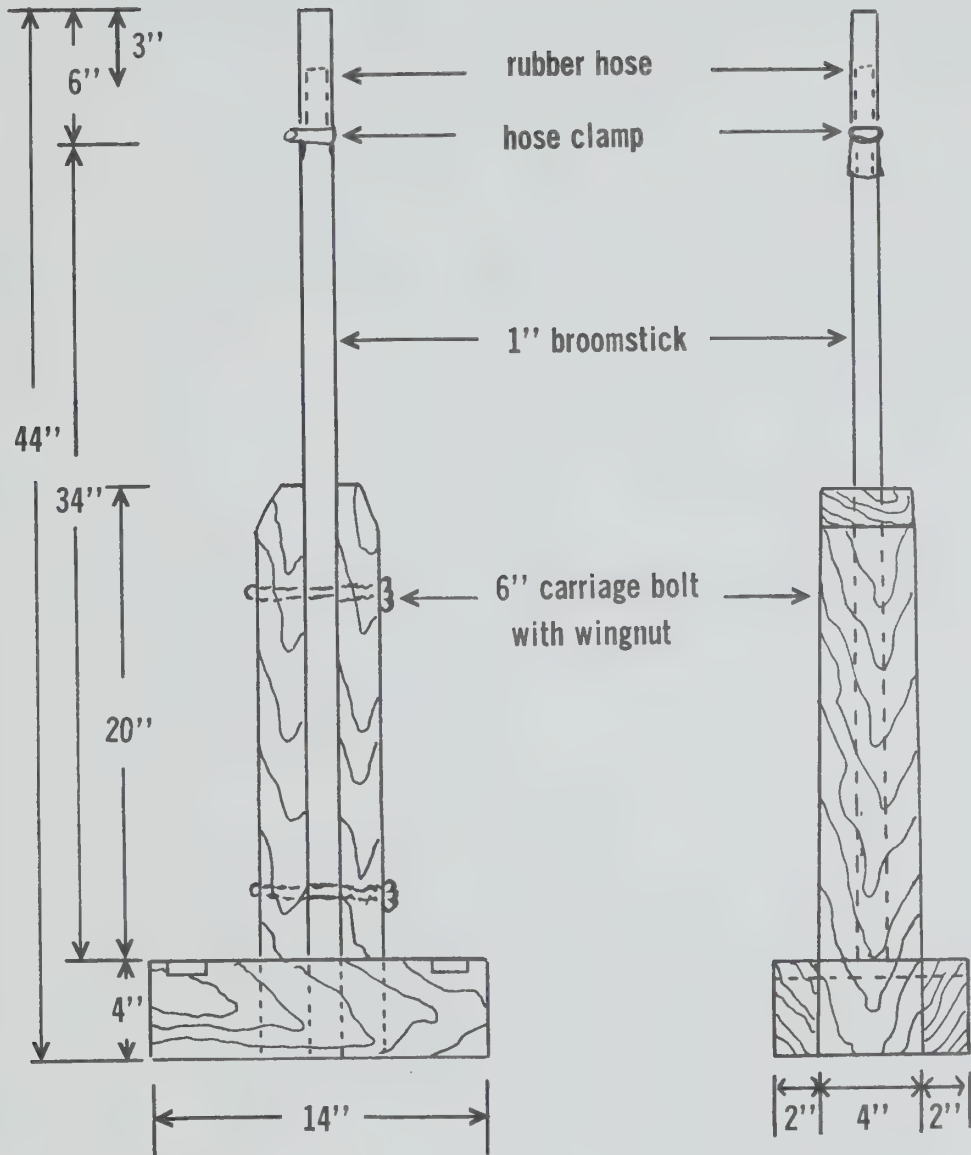
For an outside pitch, place the tee 3" in front of the plate in line with the outside corner.

These positions of the tee coincide with where the ball should be hit on inside, middle, and outside pitches.

It has been experimentally proven that batting averages have improved as much as 30% after hitting practices have been conducted with the tee.

Why not make one for your team to use? Notice the players' interest and hitting averages perk up.

Write to the Youth and Recreation Branch if you run into any difficulties in the construction or use of the tee.



# BASEBALL TEE

Scale 1½" - 1'

## GAMES OF THE BASEBALL - SOFTBALL TYPE

Introduce one of the following games into your practices. They will pep up your players especially near the end of a long season when interest can lag.

### Goal Ball

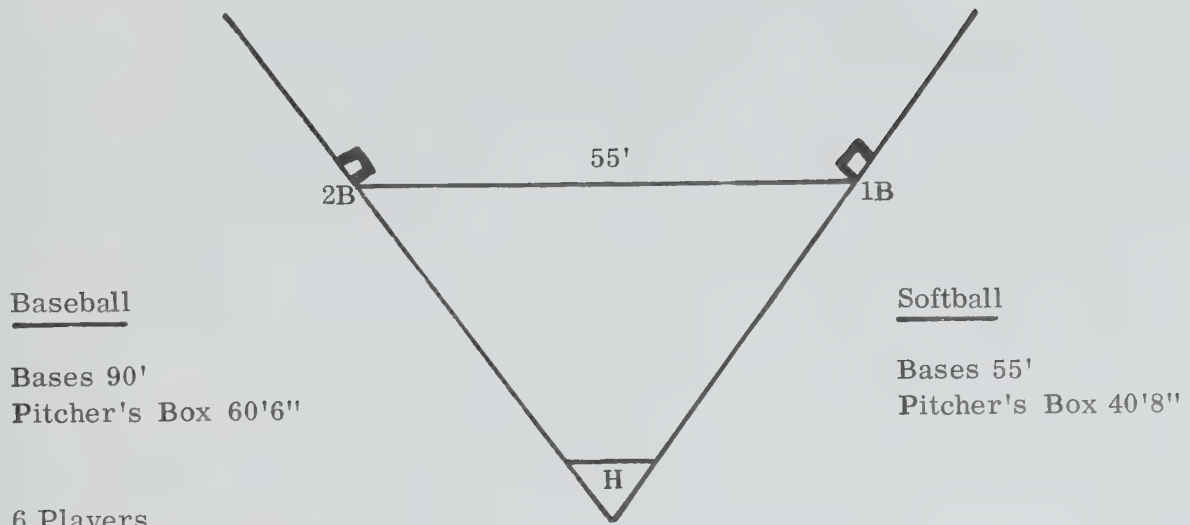
- This game is best played with 2, 3 or 4 players.
- Mark off a goal depending upon how far away the batter stands.
- If 2 play, have a hitter and a fielder.
- If 3 play, have hitter, pitcher, fielder.
- This can also be played in teams of 3 or 4.
- The ball is hit toward the goal. Each goal counts one run.
- The fielder attempts to keep the ball from entering the goal.
- Allow ten hits per batter.
- OR
- If using a pitcher, then a strike out or a fly ball puts the batter out.

### Work-up

- Any number can play this game.
- Distribute players around the various positions.
- If using only 1 or 2 batters, then have only 1 base.
- The first batter hits the pitched ball and tries to reach first base, or first and back to home safely.
- The second batter tries to drive number one home.
- If you use three batters, then use all the bases.
- With two on base, the runner must score on the third hit or else be forced out at home plate.
- The player who makes the put-out moves to first base. From there he progresses to pitcher, catcher, and batter.
- OR
- Have players gradually move from the outfield to the infield and finally to bat. They advance one position at each put-out, regardless of who makes the put-out.



## 6-Man Baseball or Softball



- Catcher, pitcher, first baseman, second baseman, left and right fielders
- Only two bases are used (see diagram of field)
- Play exactly as baseball or softball, except foul balls count as  $\frac{1}{2}$  a strike (2 strikes - 2 foul balls would put a batter out)
- This can be played with teams of six
- OR
- As a game of work-up

## Bunt and Run the Bases

- Five men to a team, catcher, pitcher, first, second, and third baseman
- Batter gets 4 balls and 3 strikes
- HE MUST BUNT
- He runs the bases while bunt is fielded and thrown around the bases TWICE
- Score a run for every base he touches before the ball circles the infield twice

## 3 Grounders or a Fly

- Best played with 5, 6, or 7 players
- Pitcher, catcher, batter, fielders
- When a fielder has successfully fielded three grounders or caught one fly ball, he becomes pitcher who advances to catcher and catcher becomes the batter

SEND THEM HOME WHILE THEY ARE STILL EAGER

### Pegging First

- A regular diamond is used
- Two teams compete
- Every man comes to bat each inning
- Player hits the ball and attempts to reach first base
- Team scores one point for every man who reaches first base safely
- The team that accumulates the largest number of runs wins
- The game may consist of 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 innings
- After all nine players have had a turn at bat, the teams switch
- Variation is to allow a runner who safely reaches 1B to continue to advance as in ordinary baseball or softball
- The team that accumulates 21 points first wins
- Score a point for every base reached safely

### Lineball

- The field consists of 2 parallel lines drawn 45 feet apart
- Team A and B line up, one on each line facing each other
- A x x x x x x x
- B o o o o o o o
- End player "o" hits the ball across the field to team A
- If the ball crosses their line, it counts one run for B
- Team A then hits the ball back again
- Each player in turn hits the ball toward the opposing team
- Score by:
  - Counting how many runs are made when every player has hit the ball once
  - OR
  - The first team to amass 10 runs wins

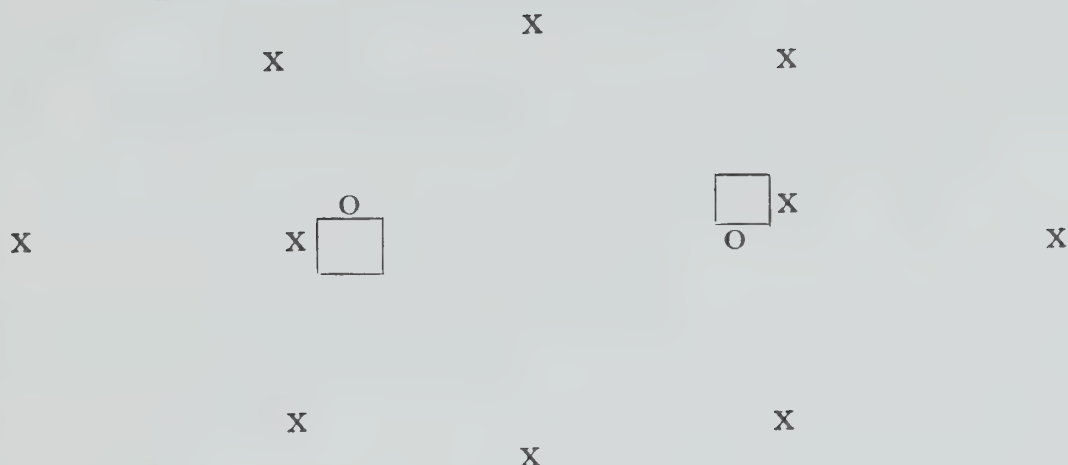
### Speedball

Baseball or softball rules apply except:

- Only 4 batters may come up in one inning
- Innings end when 3 men are out or the fourth man completes his play
- Runs scored on the fourth man's hits count unless he is put out before they score
- If a player is allowed a base on balls, it does not count as a man at bat
- Decide upon the number of innings before you start

PLACE SOME RESPONSIBILITY UPON THE PLAYERS

## Hit and Run



This is an ideal game for late summer when interest in baseball and softball is lagging.

- 2 bases and any playing field
- 10 players on each team
- 2 pitchers, 8 fielders
- 2 batters, 8 fielders
- 2 batters o1 and o2
- Ball is pitched from 3 feet behind the base
- Batsmen carry their bats and exchange bases to score a run when :
  - Any ball is hit in any direction
  - Any ball swung at and missed by the catcher
  - Four balls count as one run
- Batsman is out when :
  - Three strikes are made on him
  - A fly ball is caught
  - The ball is placed on the base before runner reaches it while trying to exchange bases
  - A batter is hit by a batted ball before it has been touched by a fielder
  - A batter interferes with a fielder
- When a batter is out, the pair of batsmen are retired and a new pair comes to bat
- 3 outs retire the side
- Only ten runs may be scored by a pair of batsmen at one time at bat
- If a fielder interferes with a batter, the batter is safe
- Pitchers may be changed at any time
- State the number of innings to be played before starting (7 usually)
- Strikes and balls are not cancelled by a run being scored

ANY DRILL THAT INVOLVES GAME SKILLS IS OF VALUE

## TEAM QUIZ

Here are a few suggested questions that a coach might ask his players :

- What are some of the duties of a manager?
- What can players do to help him?
- What training rules do you think are most important?
- Why is it essential to have a set of rules laid down for a game?
- Why is "horseplay" dangerous?
- Why are fundamentals so important?
- Which fundamental do you think is most important?
- What is the effective hitting area of the bat?  
Have one of the boys demonstrate "plate coverage", another "stance", another boy "the swing", just as though they were teaching youngsters themselves. Do this with each fundamental. It makes them stop and think about what they are doing.
- What is the most important fundamental of good pitching?
- With a man on first base and none out, if a single is hit to left field, where should the pitcher stand defensively on the throw to third base?
- What is the difference between a "sacrifice bunt", and a "bunt for a base hit"?
- Which way should the ball be thrown for greatest accuracy?
- How should the ball be gripped?
- What are some of the important things to remember when fielding a ground ball? A fly ball?
- How should a fielder stand when he is tagging a runner at 2B or 3B?  
How should he hold the ball?
- To which base is it wisest for an outfielder to throw with a runner on base?

TEACH THE PLAYERS TO THINK ABOUT WHAT THEY DO



- When should a hook slide be used? A straight slide?
- What are the 'cover-up positions' for ... each member of the team ... ?
- When should an infielder cut off the throw to home plate?
- When is the only time that an infield should 'close in'?

These are only a few to guide you. Modify these and make up some of your own. The main object is to get players to think about what they do .

BE SURE THAT EVERY BOY KNOWS THE "SIGNALS"

### SUCCESSFUL UMPIRING

Remember that your function as umpire is to insure that the game is played fairly and in accordance with the rules. You should be in full control of the game, while remaining as inconspicuous as possible.

Whenever umpiring minor league games take time to explain an infraction of the rules or some unknown interpretation. You can help improve baseball and softball immeasurably if you will just exert your influence and knowledge upon the players.

Successful umpiring depends upon many factors but the close observance of a few basic principles will start you off on the right footing.

KNOW THE RULES AND YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS UMPIRE

- Get to the game early
- Do not fraternize with players
- Inspect equipment and playing facilities
- Check with the scorer re lineups
- If there are two umpires, clarify the duties of each

HAVE PLAYERS CRITICIZE THEMSELVES AND EACH OTHER

Clarify ground rules for both teams.

Dress the part of an umpire. Umpires are known as "the men in blue".

#### WEAR:

- Blue trousers
- A distinctive solid coloured top — navy blue shirt
- Spikes can be very beneficial
- A mask and a chest protector
- Shin guards as well

#### HAVE ALSO:

- A whisk
- An indicator
- A rule book

Announce the batteries.

#### DURING THE GAME

- Be decisive when you make a "call"
- Your voice should be authoritative but not antagonistic
- Know your duties and positions on various plays
- STAY ON TOP OF THE PLAY
- Get your mask off and cover the bases
- Use signals
- Do not call balls or strikes before the ball crosses the plate
- Do not turn your head
- Keep your eyes on the ball at all times
- Watch baserunners
- Manager or captain may ASK A QUESTION concerning INTERPRETATIONS but not DECISIONS
- Answer these questions with assurance and dispatch
- Complete your duties at the end of the game, leave the field immediately, do not linger

#### RULES

Baseball rule books are available from the Ontario Baseball Association.

Softball rule books are available from the Ontario Amateur Softball Association.

Rules change from time to time.

USE YOUR VOICE WITH SURETY

## FILMS OF INTEREST TO COACHES

(All 16 mm. sound)

Batter Up — 20 minutes; color, (Analyzes styles of great hitters)  
Athletic Institute of America, 805 Merchandise Mart, Chicago, Illinois

Catching in Baseball — 10 minutes, b & w, (Analysis of catching methods;  
selection of balls and gloves; practice methods), Encyclopedia Britannica  
Films, 151 Bloor Street W, Toronto 5, Ontario

Hitting in Baseball — 10 minutes, b & w, (Hitting fundamentals) Encyclopedia  
Britannica Films, 151 Bloor St. W, Toronto 5, Ontario

Modern Baseball — 30 minutes, color, (Outstanding players demonstrate  
proper methods of playing the nine positions), Official Sport Films. Agent:  
Canadian Film Institute, 1762 Carling Avenue, Ottawa 13, Ontario

Play Ball, Son — 30 minutes, b & w, (Based on Bert Dunne's book. Action  
and slow motion shots demonstrated by boys, cover all activities on diamond.  
Special emphasis given to pitching and hitting.)

This is an old film, but may be available from some film libraries.

Softball for Girls — 10 minutes, b & w, (A study of the fundamental skills of  
throwing, catching, batting and fielding demonstrated in last inning.)  
Athletic Institute of America, 805 Merchandise Mart, Chicago, Illinois

Softball Fundamentals — 12 minutes, b & w, (Examples of incorrect form  
are shown and corrections are demonstrated. Base running, catching,  
pitching, throwing illustrated. Tips for left and right hand batters.)  
Athletic Institute of America, 805 Merchandise Mart, Chicago, Illinois

Throwing in Baseball — 10 minutes, b & w, (Analysis of throwing styles)  
Encyclopedia Britannica Films, 151 Bloor St. W, Toronto 5, Ontario

### Filmstrips

Beginning Baseball — color. (A series of seven filmstrips that demonstrate  
each baseball fundamental), Athletic Institute of America, 805 Merchandise  
Mart, Chicago, Illinois









